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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

22 November 1948

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM NO. 77

SUBJECT: Soviet Troop Withdrawals from Germany

1. The Interdepartmental Coordinating Staff, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, has requested a CIA estimate of the possibilities of:

a. A Soviet proposal at the current session of the UNGA for the quadripartite withdrawal of occupation troops from Germany; and

b. A unilateral Soviet troop withdrawal from Germany prior to 1 February 1949.

2. CIA considers it unlikely that a Soviet proposal for a quadripartite withdrawal will be made in the UNGA because of the Soviet contention that the UN is not competent to discuss the German situation and because of the technical difficulties of placing such an obvious Soviet propaganda item on the already swollen agenda. The USSR could, however, present the proposal with equal force through various other media. CIA believes that the USSR will repeat its previous suggestions for a four-power withdrawal and, if adequate opportunity arises, may officially advance such a proposal for propaganda reasons.

3. A unilateral Soviet evacuation of Germany prior to 1 February 1949 is not believed possible without jeopardizing the Communist Party machinery that the USSR has been attempting to build as a control mechanism in the Soviet Zone. By February, this machinery will not be strong enough to stand alone against anti-Communist pressure. CIA does not believe, therefore, that the USSR will abandon eastern Germany for propaganda purposes prior to that date.

4. In support of the foregoing, CIA has weighed the following advantages and disadvantages to the USSR in each question.

a. With regard to a Soviet proposal, made outside the UNGA, for a four-power withdrawal from Germany, CIA believes that the USSR anticipates a Western Power rejection of the suggestion and plans to exploit the Western Power refusal for purposes of propaganda.

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(1) Certain advantageous consequences for the USSR might occur from a Western Power rejection of such a Soviet motion:

(a) Those few elements in western Germany still naive enough to believe Soviet propaganda would be more favorably inclined toward the USSR, although relatively unable to do anything about it.

(b) Similarly naive persons throughout the world would find it a substantiation of their convictions of Soviet good intentions.

(c) Some of the smaller nations, afraid of being trapped between east and west in a war, would welcome it as a step toward easing tension.

(d) The Western Powers would view any popular sentiment in the US expressed in favor of abandoning occupation as indicative of an American return to isolationism and would be less prone to support US policies.

(2) Opposed to these points are definitely disadvantageous results, from the Soviet viewpoint, of a Soviet evacuation proposal:

(a) Wherever fear exists of a resurgent Germany, the USSR would be condemned for encouraging this menace merely for propaganda's sake.

(b) The Communist Parties in such areas would suffer loss of support.

In summation of these consequences, it is considered that the USSR will proceed with its advocacy of a withdrawal from Germany because: (a) the USSR can control those satellite states which fear a revived Germany; (b) in other countries where a fear of Germany exists the Communist Parties have already lost their political power in major part; and (c) sufficient comment in the US favoring such a proposal might frighten the other Western Powers.

b. With regard to a unilateral Soviet evacuation of eastern Germany before 1 February 1949, there also are advantages and disadvantages.

(1) The favorable consequences for the USSR would appear to be:

(a) The prestige of the German regime to which the USSR hands over power, despite the unpopularity of such an obvious Soviet puppet, would be increased.

(b) Through the use of this satellite government or administration, were it able to last, a more satisfactory long-term dominance over Germany might be accomplished than that effected by direct control.

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(c) The USSR could pretend to be disassociated from responsibility for totalitarian tactics later used by the German Communists.

(d) Soviet forces would no longer be exposed to "contamination" by contact with the west.

(e) The USSR might escape immediate blame for the hardships of the Soviet Zone.

(f) German unity sentiment and a consequent desire to have the Western Powers leave Germany would be increased.

(2) Opposed to the favorable results, however, a unilateral withdrawal would bring unfavorable consequences such as:

(a) The unprepared and potentially disloyal Communist control mechanism, which the USSR would leave as an administrative body, would be seriously jeopardized by the action of anti-Communist elements, particularly if the latter received Western Power support.

(b) An attempt to leave Soviet personnel behind, as "assistants" or "advisers" to the new regime in a transparent effort to insure its stability would negate the propaganda value of the evacuation.

(c) A weakening of the Soviet economic position in eastern Germany would ensue, as would a growth of eastern German trade with the west.

(d) The USSR could no longer use its position as an occupation power for bargaining purposes.

(e) Western penetration of eastern Germany by propaganda, subversion, and espionage would be greatly facilitated.

(f) A slight loss in the Soviet military position, amounting in effect to the loss of an advanced base, would be incurred and the USSR would possibly be caused to supply from the USSR such troops as were held on the Polish border.

Balancing these favorable and unfavorable consequences against each other, CIA concludes that the threat to a Soviet eastern German "stooge" regime in the absence of Soviet troops heavily outweighs the largely propagandistic benefits from a unilateral Soviet evacuation of eastern Germany and that under foreseeable conditions the USSR will not withdraw prior to 1 February 1949.

Notes: Nothing said above in consideration of an actual Soviet evacuation of Germany affects the propaganda value of Soviet announcements of such an intention. The USSR may declare its readiness to leave Germany at any time; the propaganda benefits would be less, however, than from a rejected proposal for a quadripartite withdrawal.

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